

Message Text

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ACTION EA-13

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FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5427

USDEL JEC PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 13895

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MOPS, VS

SUBJECT: MR IV SITREP FOR AUGUSTISQN 1973

FOLLOWING SENT ACTION SAIGON INFO USSAG NKP USDAO SAIGON
AUGUST 1 REPEATED TO YOU

QUOTE CAN THO 0619

SUMMARY: 21ST DIVISION COMMANDER CLAIMS SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION
OF RECENT CHUONG THIEN OPERATIONS BUT REPORTS INDICATE CON-
TINUED VC MAIN FORCE ACTIVITY IN EASTERN CHUONG THIEN AND
MUCH OF THE REST OF THE PROVINCE REMAINS INSECURE. MR IV VC
MILITARY ACTIVITY WAS HIGHER AT THE END OF THE JULY THAN
AT ANY TIME SINCE CEASEFIRE II.

CHAU DOC REPORTS PROBLEMS WITH CAMBODIAN REFUGEES AND
INCREASED INFILTRATION FROM THE NUI O AREA IN CAMBODIA.
END SUMMARY.

1. SECURITY SITUATION:

(A) MR IV MILITARY ACTIVITY CONTINUED

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AT ABOUT THE SAME RELATIVELY HIGH LEVELS AS THE

LAST WEEK OF JULY. MR IV REPORTED 42 VC-INITIATED INCIDENTS JULY 30, TO INCLUDE 32 ATTACKS BY FIRE, 9 HARASSMENTS, AND ONE TERRORIST INCIDENT. OF THE 42, 20 WERE IN CHUONG THIEN, 9 IN CHAU DOC. IV CORPS RERMRTS 17 TROOPS KILLED, 88 WOUNDED, AND ONE MISSING AND CLAIMS 42 VC KILLED AND ONE CAPTURED. THE IV CORPS BRIEFING ON AUGUST 1, COVERING JULY 31, WAS CANCELLED.

(B) VNAF OFFICERS INDICATED TO CONGEN JULY 31 THAT FIVE VNAF HELICOPTERS WERE FIRED UPON DURING WEEK OF JULY 23-28. ONE LOST. SINCE CEASEFIRE I, ONE VNAF OFFICER ESTIMATED 45 INCIDENTS OF GROUND FIRE ON HELICOPTERS, WITH 15 LOSSES.

(C) CHUONG THIEN 21ST ARVN DIVISION COMMANDER BGEN LE VAN HUNG SAID IN A JULY 31 DAN CHU NEWSPAPER INTERVIEW THE GVN OBJECTIVES IN CHUONG THIEN HAVE BEEN ACCOMPLISHED. HUNG STATED THAT HIS TROOPS HAVE JUST FINISHED PUSHING COMMUNIST FORCES OUT OF ALL THE CHUONG THIEN AREAS THEY

HAD TAKEN AFTER THE JANUARY CEASEFIRE AND PUSHED THEM BACK INTO THE U MINH FOREST. HUNG IDENTIFIED THE TWO AREAS OF CHUONG THIEN WHICH HAD BEEN TEMPORARILY TAKEN OVER BY THE COMMUNISTS AS THE NORTHERN PART OF KIEN THIEN DISTRICT AND THE CAI TU RIVER AREA IN HOA LUU VILLAGE. BOTH ARE NOW CLEARED AND IN THE HANDS OF THE GVN, ACCORDING TO HUNG. HUNG SAID THE COMMUNISTS HAD TRIED TO SECURE A WATER ROUTE FROM RACH GIA INTO CHUONG THIEN BUT THAT HIS DIVISION HAD FOILED THE PLAN DURING THE PAST THREE WEEKS OF FIGHTING. HE CLAIMED 150 COMMUNIST SOLDIERS KILLED DURING THAT PERIOD. (COMMENT: HUNG'S ANNOUNCEMENT, THE GIST OF WHICH WE ALSO HEARD JULY 29 FROM A 21ST DIVISION REGIMENTAL COMMANDER, SIGNALS, IN OUR OPINION, AN IMPORTANT CHANGE IN GVN STRATEGY. WE CANNOT, HOWEVER, CREDIT GVN CLAIMS OF SUCCESS. FOR EXAAMPLE, THE PROVINCE REPRESENTATIVE IN CHUONG THIEN REPORTS A MAJOR VC MAIN FORCE ATTACK ON CATHOLIC TRANG TRANH HAMLET, HOA HUNG VILLAGE IN NORTHEAST CHUONG THIEN. (SEE FURTHER ON CHUONG THIEN BELOW, PARA 2). WE ESTIMATE THAT THE GVN HAVING SUFFERED OVERALL HEAVY CASUALTIES AND SEVERAL BLISTERING DEFEATS IN ITS ATTEMPTS TO CHALLENGE

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VC/NVA POST-CEASEFIRE ENCROACHMENTS, HAS DECIDED TO CALL OFF OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS FOR THE TIME BEING. END COMMENT).

2. SELECTED PROVINCE COMMENT:

(A) THE CHAU DOC VICE CONSUL REPORTS CONTINUING MILITARY ACTIVITY IN THE SEVEN MOUNTAINS AREA. ALL VC ACTIVITY, INCLUDING THREE MORTARING INCIDENTS

ON JULY 30, APPEARS AIMED AT LESSENING GVN PRESSURE AT GPJI AND COTO MOUNTAIN AND AT SHIELDING INCREASED INFILTRATION FROM O MOUNTAIN TO THE SEVEN MOUNTAINS AREA. POSSIBLY OVER 100 NEW INFILTRATORS HAVE ENTERED THE AREA IN THE LAST SEVEN DAYS. A CONVOY OF 9 POL SHIPS, 3 MERCHANT SHIPS, 2 TUGS, AND 2 AMMUNITION BARGES PASSED THE BORDER INTO SOME 15,000 CAMBODIAN REFUGEES FOR SEVERAL MONTHS, OF WHICH ABOUT 7000 ARE IN TWO REFUGEE CAMPS IN TINH BIEN DISTRICT AND 8000 SCATTERED THROUGHOUT THE PROVINCE WITH FRIENDS AND RELATIVES. OF THIS LATTER GROUP, SOME 2000 HAVE GATHERED IN RECENT DAYS AT THE PRIA PAGODA, AN CU VILLAGE, TRI TON DISTRICT, AND REQUESTED GVN TO ADMIT THEM TO THE TWO CAMPS IN TINH BIEN. US ADVISORS INSTEAD ARE RECOMMENDING ESTABLISHMENT OF A NEW CAMP AT AN CU.

(B) THE CHUONG THIEN PROVINCIAL REPRESENTATIVE REPORTS SEVERAL MORTAR INCIDENTS JULY 27-29 AT KIEN THIEN DISTRICT COMPOUND AND LONG MY DISTRICT TOWN, IN BOTH CASES AIMED AT GVN GUN EMPLACEMENTS, AND AT VI THANH AIRFIELD ON JULY 29. THREE SHELLINGS FOLLOWED BY GROUND ASSAULTS WERE REPORTED BY THE PROVINCE ON JULY 30 RESULTING IN 5 TROOPS KILLED, 12 WOUNDED AND TWO MISSING. THERE WERE TWO HEAVY VC GROUND ATTACKS THE NIGHT OF JULY 30-31: AT TRANG TRANH HAMLET (SEE ABOVE) AND AT THUY LIEU VILLAGE HEADQUARTERS. THE THUY LIEU ATTACK WAS THE THIRD SUCH VC ATTACK SINCE CEASEFIRE I IN AN ALQA FORMERLY PREDOMINANTLY UNDER GVN CONTROL. SINCE JANUARY, ABOUT 50 PER CENT OF THE VILLAGE POPULATION HAS LEFT THE AREA--PERHAPS ONE-THIRD TO VC AREAS. THE LATEST ATTACK RESULTED IN TWO PF KILLED, THREE WOUNDED, AND 60 PER CENT DAMAGE TO THE VILLAGE HEADQUARTERS.

(C) THE VINH LONG VICE CONSUL REPORTED SEVEN INCIDENTS ON JULY 31, UP FROM THE RECENT DAILY AVERAGE OF 2-3. HOWEVER, CONFIDENTIAL

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THE VC MAIN FORCE D-3 REGIMENT IS APPARENTLY NOT INVOLVED. A GRENADE IN TRUNG THANH VILLAGE AT AN OUTDOOR THEATER KILLED FOUR CIVILIANS AND WOUNDED 12 ON THE EVENING OF JULY 28.

(D) THE VINH BINH PROVINCIAL REPRESENTATIVE REPORTS THE HIGHEST LEVEL OF VC ACTIVITY SINCE CEASEFIRE II, WITH 30 INCIDENTS REPORTED DURING THE WEEK OF JULY 22-28, RESULTING IN A TOTAL OF 145 CASUALTIES (VC, GVN, CIVILIAN). THE NEWLY TRAINED 473 RF BATTALION WAS SEVERELY DEFEATED IN AN OPERATION IN TIEU CAN DISTRICT ON JULY 27, WITH SOME 50 CASUALTIES (SEE CAN THO 0615). POOR LEADERSHIP AND PLANNING WERE CLEARLY INVOLVED: ALTHOUGH KNOWN TO BE COMPROMISED FROM A PREVIOUS OPERATION, THE PROVINCIAL RADIO CODE HAD NOT BEEN CHANGED. THE PROVINCIAL GUNSHIPS WERE

ELSEWHERE IN THE PROVINCE. REPORTEDLY, MOST OF THE BATTALION
LOST ITS WEAPONS WHEN IT SCATTERED. THE PROVINCIAL
REPRESENTATIVE REPORTS A BELIEF AMONG THE SOLDIERS THAT,
IF THEY ABANDON THEIR WEAPONS WHEN THEY RUN, THE VC WILL
NOT TAKE THEM PRISONER. SIGNED LEHMANN UNQUOTE
MARTIN

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